

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method of providing a promotion to a user comprising:
providing the user with the promotion;
determining whether the user has selected the promotion;
if the user has selected the promotion, informing a retailer about the selected promotion;
determining whether the selected promotion is being redeemed at the retailer;
if the selected promotion is being redeemed at the retailer, determining whether the selected promotion corresponds to the promotion being redeemed; and
if the selected promotion corresponds to the promotion being redeemed, providing the user with the promotion.
2. The method of claim 1 further including the act of providing the user with a promotion receipt.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the promotion receipt indicates the physical location of an item corresponding to the promotion.
4. The method of claim 2 wherein the promotion receipt includes directions to the store carrying an item corresponding to the promotion.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein the directions is selected from a group comprising maps and URLs.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the act of informing a retailer about the selected promotion includes sending the retailer a promotion identifier.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein the promotion identifier corresponds to an item record.
8. The method of claim 7 wherein the item record is stored in a database.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the act of determining whether the selected promotion corresponds to the promotion being redeemed further includes:

- checking a first portion of a promotion identifier;
- if the first portion of the promotion identifier matches a target code, extracting a second portion of the promotion identifier; and
- accessing information within an item record associated with the second portion of the promotion code and including information regarding the promotion.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the item record includes information selected from a group comprising an item code, department number, pricing method, description, manufacturer number, promotion value, limitations, and family code.

11. A method of delivering a secure promotion to a user comprising:

- a. collecting a plurality of offers;
- b. assigning a unique identifier to each of the offers from the plurality of offers;
- c. providing a retailer with the plurality of offers;
- d. identifying the user;
- e. providing the user with a portion of the plurality of offers for selection;
- f. determining which of the provided offers the user has selected;
- g. informing the retailer about the selected offers by the user;
- h. validating the selected offers;
- i. redeeming the selected offers; and
- j. providing a clearinghouse with the redemption information.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the clearinghouse performs acts a through g.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the act of identifying the user is accomplished through information selected from a list comprising name, address, email address, social security number, biometrics, and frequent shopper number.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein the unique identifier identifies both the offer and the user.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein the unique identifier is encoded.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the unique identifier is encoded utilizing techniques selected from a list comprising bar coding, UPC encoding, and encryption.

17. The method of claim 11 wherein the offers are selected from a group comprising coupons, certificates, product samples, airline tickets, and gift certificates.

18. The method of claim 11 wherein informing the retailer is accomplished by a technique selected from a list comprising a user printed certificate, a frequent shoppers card, a frequent shopping number, and a securely printed certificate.

19. The method of claim 11 wherein the retailer is selected from a group comprising a grocery store, a convenience store, an travel agent, a kiosk, an authorized dealer, an online retailer, and a manufacturer.

20. A system for provision of a secure promotion to a user comprising:

- a user location configured to provide the user with access to the secure promotion;

- a service location coupled to the user location, the service location configured to provide options to the user regarding the secure promotion;

- a retailer location coupled to the service location, the retailer location configured to receive the secure promotion; and

- a unique id code associated with the secure promotion, the unique id code having a first and second portions, the first portion of the unique id code indicating whether the secure promotion is a special promotion, the second portion of the unique id code indicating a link to an item record, the item record having fields comprising data regarding an item associated with the secure promotion,

- wherein the user receives benefits of the secure promotion by provision of the unique id code to the retailer.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein the retailer location includes a POS terminal.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein the POS terminal is coupled to a bar code scanner.

23. The system of claim 20 wherein the user, service, and retailer locations are coupled via a connection selected from a group comprising the Internet, an intranet, a WAN, a LAN, a broadband connection, and a wireless connection.